

Summer 2006 Newsletter

Volume 25, Number 2 COPYRIGHT 2006

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BHS' Fall 2006

Walking Tours

The Berkeley Historical Society (BHS) begins its fall season of six walking tours with its September 23 tour of the North Shattuck neighborhood and concludes on December 2 with a bonus walking tour of the Claremont Hotel and gardens.

Saturday, October 23:

Old and New in the North Shattuck Neighborhood, led by Bob Johnson

Saturday, October 7:

The Rocks of Thousand Oaks, led by Paul Grunland

Saturday, October 21:

Peraltas of Codornices Creek, led by Dale Smith and Carole Bennett-Simmons

Friday, November 10:

75 Years at Lawrence Berkeley Lab, led by Terry Powell and a graduate student

Sunday, November 19: UC in 1931: An Era of Change, led by Steve Finacom

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE COLLECTION, BHS PHOTO #0431

Dedication of Berkeley Municipal Heliport, October 9, 1961. Tom Winburn, President, Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, left. Mayor Claude Hutchinson, right.

Little-Known Aviation History, Part Two

Berkeley Takes Off!

By Linda Rosen

Berkeley Municipal Airport

In 1925, Capt. Stanford E. Moses, Berkeley resident and commander of the air forces of the Twelfth Naval District, lobbied to build an aviation field on San Francisco Bay sanitary landfill. He told city officials that a city without an airport would be like a city without a railroad, and they were hooked, along with the Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club. City Manager John Edy proposed that the City Council lease-to-buy 13 acres of tideland at the foot of Harrison Street from the San Francisco Chemical Company for \$26,000. Moses brought a lieutenant from the S.S. Langley aircraft carrier to study the site. By 1928 a 1500-foot runway had been built in the direction of the prevailing winds. The Berkeley Municipal Airport was approved as an emergency field and was leased

to the Berkeley Steel Construction Company, which built a hanger.

Thomas S. Neilson erected the Berkeley Steel Construction Company around 1923 at Second and Camelia streets. Using new all-welded steel construction, the plant eventually grew into the first electrically welded building in America large enough to carry ten-ton electric cranes. Neilson then applied his technology to airplanes and, in 1928, built the Neilson Steel Aircraft Corporation nearby to manufacture his Neilson Coupe NC-1 "Golden Bear" steel monoplane. No pillars were needed to support the roof of the hanger, so there was 16,000 square feet of unobstructed space to hold three planes. R.F. Korman, who had worked in the plant that built Charles Lindbergh's "Spirit of St. Louis," supervised the air-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



John Aronovici and AnaLuisa Coplan

President's Report

Hello Berkeley History Center faithful . . .

Since our last newsletter, we welcomed aboard two new Board Members, stefen and Pamela Morgan, both long-time community members and history enthusiasts. We are thrilled to have their knowledge and helpfulness enhance the Berkeley History Center.

In June, we were at International Food Festival on San Pablo and University avenues, and at the Juneteenth festival in South Berkeley. Our booths, adorned with vintage photos, had us greeting visitors, handing out newsletters and selling Berkeley memorabilia. We hope to see you in the BHS booth at the next two Berkeley parades and festivals in September: the Solano Stroll and How Berkeley Can You Be.

With many thanks to the City of Berkeley, we have more space in the Veteran's Building for BHS's archives. We have been busy decluttering and organizing archives to better serve you.

We are here to protect, preserve and share Berkeley history and we couldn't exist without your tremendous support. We thank you, thank you, thank you for your money, time and amazing energy.

- AnaLuisa Coplan and John Aronovici

James Tippett 's Memories

Former Berkeley resident James Tippett recently donated items from his family home, located on Marin Avenue. Mr. Tippet was born in 1930 in Oakland and moved to Berkeley in 1936. His father, Roscoe Brenton Tippet (1898-1991) was the chief savings officer at the downtown Berkeley branch of Bank of American and later worked as an administrator at UC Berkeley. His mother, Evalyn May Tippet (1902-1995) was the daughter of Berkeley architect Frank May.

Mr. Tippet attended Cal Poly and worked as a systems engineer for American Airlines in Tulsa OK. His childhood home on Marin is located across the street from Cragmont School and was the first house on the street. He attended Garfield Junior High and Berkeley High School, as did his mother. On a recent visit to Berkeley, he took the time to recall some events from his childhood.

Robert N. Roghworth was principal of Cragmont when James was there. Miss Billings was his first or second grade teacher. She taught her students to count on their fingers and it took him some time to undo the damage! His sixth grade teacher was Mr. Turner. James was bored in his class and drilled a hole through a window frame to foster the growth of a family of bees. It remained there until the school bulding was torn down. One of his classmates, Don Melvin, obviously ahead of his time, built a voice-activated toy train that fascinated James.

Another teacher kept a pepper plant in

the classroom. One day James broke off a pod and put it in his mouth. His mouth burning, he ran from the classroom looking for a hose. He had heard that mud would take the sting away, so he took a hose, mixed up some mud, and ate it. It didn't help.

The schoolchildren divided the playground at Cragmont into separate territories for boys and girls. There were boulders on the school property and one rock was for boys and another was for girls.

Since he lived across the street from Cragmont, he came home for lunch every day. The Junior Traffic Police wouldn't let him cross mid-block and forced him to walk to the corner. But, when they weren't looking, he would sneak across.

He had a summer job working at a gas station at Vine and Shattuck. He saved his money and bought his first car from his father when he was 14 years old and drove it to Garfield Junior High. That school was also the site of his only stage performance. He appeared in a school musical because he could play "Oh Susanna" on the harmonica. It was the only tune he knew.

James was not a diligent student at Berkeley High and remembers Mr. Wagonette, the truant officer very well because he cut school most days and would be found at a local coffee shop, designing cars on a paper napkin.

We thank Mr. Tippett for his donations (listed below) and for taking the time to share these memories with us.

Donated Items

Donna Graves: A copy of Francis Albrier's oral history.

Family of Louise Hector: A collection of medical equipment owned by Dr. Hector who started the original Berkeley free health clinic circa 1910 and an original woodblock print.

James Tippett: Antique medicine bottles, a hatbox from an early Berkeley store, photos of the May family, photos of early Berkeley and the 1923 Berkeley fire.

Margo Vest: Victorian clothing

Carrie Smith: 1935 Wedgwood Golden Gate exhibition memorial platter with an aerial photo of Berkeley.



History Center is located in the Veterans Memorial Building 1931 Center St., Berkeley, CA 94701 Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1190 Berkeley, CA 94701 510-848-0181

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Berkeley takes off!

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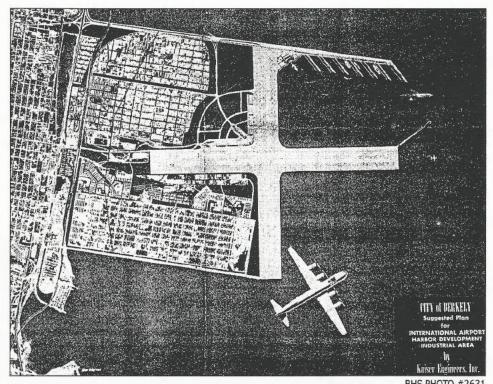
plane construction. They promoted the "Golden Bear" for its "feather-edge control" and suitability for small fields because it could take off and land in less than 100 feet.

Neilson flew and sold these planes at the airport. Citizens cheered when the first Neilson plane took off. The next year, plans were made to build a 70-acre aviation field, and toastmaster Elkinton announced that all Berkeley citizens were getting "air-minded."

When the Depression hit, Neilsen donated his time and money to develop the site and soon there were three runways of 1,000, 2,000, and 2,500 feet. All this came to a halt in 1936 when the new WPA-built East Shore Highway was constructed through the landing field to connect with the new Bay Bridge. Neilson continued to make airplanes, nonetheless, but disgruntled fans destroyed his "Golden Bear" monoplane at an August 1939 Oakland Speedway "thrill show" after being disappointed by its poor performance.

Airports in the Bay

The City of Berkeley presented five plans for a Berkeley harbor, beginning in 1912 with the Rees Plan to fill the shoreline and dig a 1,200-foot wide shipping channel from Oakland to Richmond. An island park and lagoons were included to hide the port activity. The 1930 harbor plan was the first to mention using reclaimed tideland for a 70-acre aviation field and



"Waterfront Development Plan Put Before City Council: Airport, Harbor, Industries Included" in Berkeley Daily Gazette, December 9, 1947

seaplane landing facility. Opponents argued, however, that the airport could not compete with the Oakland and San Francisco fields, which could be expanded. Only lightly loaded planes could land on the short Berkeley strip.

In both 1940 and 1943, a \$7 million Class-3 airport was included in the Berkeley City Council plans. They decided that the airport would be municipally owned, and they authorized City Manager Chester Fisk to seek a Federal WPA grant, which never materialized. Then, on January 25, 1945, the City Council approved the \$25 million Golden Gate International Airport at Berkeley plan and appointed an intercity committee

to study the ramifications. The Chamber of Commerce pushed for federal funding and published a slick brochure showing the Parr Terminal Company Plan for a shipping channel and an airport with 2-mile runways extending in three directions from Berkeley to San Francisco waters and from Berkeley to Richmond waters. Senator Hiram Johnson led Congress to authorize an Army Corps of Engineers survey, but they did not fund construction.

At the same time, the Kaiser Corporation, led by Henry J. Kaiser, was developing its own \$13,860,000 plan for the site to be called the San Francisco Bay International Airport. In December 1947, City Manager Ross Miller presented this ambitious proposal to the City Council for a harbor and an international airport with two 10,000-ft. runways on a 1,100-acre island. Robert Sibley, director of the East Bay Regional Park Board who steered the Chamber of Commerce's waterfront committee, was confident that they could raise the money to complete this "Centennial Fill Project" by 1960. The Sibley plan, which included recreation areas, was adopted by the City Council in August 1953. Vice Mayor Edward Mar-CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



BHS PHOTO #2629 -THE GREATER BERKELEY CALIFORNIA YEARBOOK, 1930



BHS PHOTO #6190

SFO Helicopter Airlines at Berkeley's Heliport, foot of University Avenue, late 1960s. Chamber of Commerce Collection.

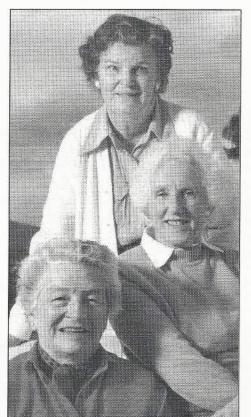
Berkeley takes off!

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tin refused to vote, however, and warned that voters would not approve "millions of dollars to develop the waterfront without more basic information. We have to keep our feet on the ground." Apparently, they did just that. The Berkeley International Airport idea ultimately died from lack of funding and competition from the Oakland Airport.

Another Airport on Bay Fill

By 1959, San Francisco Bay had shrunk 25% due to diking and filling, and many marshes, wetlands, and beaches had been destroyed. At this time, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued a report called "Future Development of the San Francisco Bay Area, 1960-2020," which stated that 243 square miles of Bay tideland had been "reclaimed" since 1850 and indicated that 325 square miles remained as "areas susceptible of reclamation." A map showed Bay development by 2020 with only a narrow chan-



COURTESY OF SAVE THE BAY ASSOCIATION
Sylvia McLaughlin, Kay Kerr, and Esther Gulick, Founders of Save the Bay
Association

nel remaining in the middle.

The Berkeley City Council favored growth, so they proposed a 1961 General Plan amendment to nearly double the size of the city by filling 2,000 acres for two miles into the Bay. They proposed yet another airport and a junior college, in addition to more housing, hotels, businesses, and recreation. This idea was pushed by business and industrial interests and supported by the Berkeley Daily Gazette. There was even a plan to sell Aquatic Park for industrial development, but it failed by one vote. The next year, the City secured an amendment to the State's tideland grant to allow any fill for commercial and industrial purposes that was specified by City Council after a public hearing.

Save the Bay

Save the Bay Association began when Kay (Mrs. Clark) Kerr and Sylvia McLaughlin met at a tea in 1960 and happened to discuss their concerns about the Army Corps of Engineers' map that they had seen in the Oakland Tribune. Soon, Es-

Berkeley takes off!

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ther Gulick offered to help them stop the City Council's proposal to fill the Bay, and the three UC wives and Town and Gown Club members tried to get the support of local leaders in January 1961. No one would help, so they started a mailing campaign that galvanized Berkeley citizens to block plans to fill the Bay. The State Legislature followed by passing the McAteer-Petris Act in 1965, putting a moratorium on Bay landfill. Further campaigning led to the creation of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). This grassroots Bay Area environmental movement captured public support and it is still in existence.

Berkeley Heliport

The City of Berkeley settled on a heliport instead of an international airport. The Chamber of Commerce worked actively with the City to get a lease from Santa Fe Railroad, and a heliport was built at the foot of University Avenue, west of the freeway, for about \$25,000. The Berkeley Heliport was dedicated with speeches, champagne, and a brass band on October 9, 1961, and given the call letters JBK, Berkeley, California. San Francisco Oakland Helicopter Airlines (SFO Helicopter) offered free flights at the opening in their 10-passenger S-62 Sikorsky helicopters. They planned to run 22 flights a day to and from the San Francisco and Oakland international airports, and the City expected an optimistic \$4,000 to \$6,000 a year in revenues from a 25-cent passenger surcharge.

The enterprise was not an economic success, however, and SFO declared bankruptcy in 1970. The company was also caught in a dispute when Santa Fe Land Improvement Co. tried to increase the cost of the lease on the land to about \$900 and the City refused to pay. Both Santa Fe and marina landowner George Murphy had filed a \$24 million inverse condemnation lawsuit against the City, claiming that it was in effect taking their land by refusing to zone the marina for development, and the City did not want



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE HILLER AVIATION MUSEUM Stanley Hiller, Jr. flying his helicopter in UC Berkeley's Memorial Stadium

to justify Santa Fe's claim by paying the higher rate.

The last helicopter flight from Berkeley took place on April 5, 1974. SFO purchased the heliport from the City, and it was dismantled and moved to the Holiday Inn at the Emeryville Marina. This put an end to Berkeley's aviation dreams.

Just think what Berkeley would be like today with an international airport in the Bay!

A "Hiller-copter" in Berkeley

The Stanley Hiller family lived at 2847 Russell Street in the 1930s and later moved to 277 Tunnel Road. Stanley, Jr., born in 1924, attended John Muir Elementary School. Stanley Sr. was an engineer, a dedicated inventor, and an early open-cockpit pilot. He built a glider in 1909 and an engine and airplane in 1910 when he was 20 years old. He flew solo in his own monoplane on June 15, 1911, and, the following year, he designed a six-cylinder 60 h.p. engine for an amphibious monoplane and took off from Lake Merritt.

Stanley, Sr. later developed Hiller Highlands in partnership with Merrill Nikkel where he installed a single conduit for underground utilities long before it became standard practice. PG&E argued that combining water, electricity, gas, and telephone lines would cause electrostatic erosion and refused to connect it until they were convinced a few years later. Their home at 1 Hiller Drive is now the site of Bentley School.

At the age of eight Stanley Jr. experimented with connecting an old washing machine engine to a homemade buggy frame and drove it around his Russell Street neighborhood. His father had taught him to fly and that led to an interest in building and flying model airplanes. Since they frequently crashed, he used the engines to build model racecars that could go up to 60 miles an hour.

He enlisted neighborhood boys to help to manufacture the cars in a backyard shop at his Tunnel Road home and sold them to a local department store. By the time Stanley was 17, Hiller Industries was a \$100,000 a year business that produced 350 miniature cars a month.

20th annual Berkeley Juneteenth Festival



PHOTO BY MARK COPLAN
Thousands of people flocked to Berkeley's Juneteenth Festival for entertainment, food, community and vendor booths. The City
of Berkeley proclaimed June 18, 2006, "Juneteenth Day." The commemoration of the end of slavery in the United States was
first observed as African American Emancipation Day on June 19, 1865 in Texas.

Berkeley takes off!

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Stanley became fascinated with vertical flight at age 15 when he studied the designs of Igor Sikorsky and thought of a few improvements. With a little help from his dad, he developed an innovative helicopter design with a counter-rotating system. The concept seemed to work initially, when a model co-axial helicopter was dropped from his father's ninth-story office window. His schoolmates cheering below were witnessing the birth of a new career in aviation.

Stanley finished high school despite his many extracurricular activities, entering the University of California at Berkeley at age 16. Shortly thereafter, he was discovered by the U.S. military as a source of aluminum fighter plane parts. Although the aircraft industry hesitated about signing subcontracts with someone so young, Hiller Industries was soon working in two shifts with seven casting machines with a \$300,000-a-

year payroll.

His college career lasted only a year; he was consumed with the history and technology of vertical flight, improving his design of a co-axial with the help of a draftsman, a welder, and an auto mechanic. Although materials were frozen by the War Production Board, he managed to put together a 100-pound model. Unfortunately, there was no one to teach him how to fly it and he tore up his father's lawn on Tunnel Road and blew out the skylights in an automotive garage in the process.

After a lack of interest shown by Army officials, the 17-year-old inventor took his aircraft and drawings to Washington, D.C., where government authorities not only permitted his proposed XH-44 helicopter to be finished, but also granted Stanley a draft deferment.

Stanley then set up the first helicopter factory on the West Coast in the National

Guard Armory at 1930-50 Addison Street to develop and test rescue and post-war aviation. In addition to serving as company president and chief engineer, he also was the chief test pilot.

On July 4, 1944, he tested his XH-44 Hiller-copter in Cal's Memorial Stadium with the machine anchored by ropes to maintain stability. A few months later, he staged a successful demonstration at San Francisco's Marina where a plaque commemorates the historic event. This was the first successful coaxial helicopter to fly in the United States and the first to use all-metal rotor blades.

In 1945, Hiller and Henry Kaiser founded United Helicopters. In 1948 the company was renamed Hiller Helicopters and achieved much success. Hiller Aircraft merged into what became Fairchild Hiller Corporation in 1968.

The Berkeley Historical Society thanks Willie Turner and the Hiller Aviation Museum for providing much of the information in this article.



PHOTO BY NELLY COPLAN

Next to the Berkeley Historical Society's booth, was the African-American Genealogical Society of Northern California. Based in Oakland, they can be reached at (877) 884-2843, www.aagnc.org



PHOTO BY MARK COPLAN

Carla Oden, artist of the 2006 "Choosing

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Peace" Juneteenth poster, and Delores Cooper Edwards, editor of the official program and one of the organizers



PHOTO BY NELLY COPLAN

Sam Dyke, organizer extraordinaire and chair of the Merchants Association of Adeline and Alcatraz

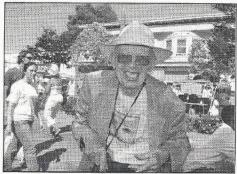


PHOTO BY NELLY COPLAN

Photographer (and BHS boardmember) Allen Stross photo-documented event

As a Berkeley History Center supporter . . .

your annual donation supports the Berkeley Historical Society, an all-volunteer organization, to archive and promote Berkeley history. Your annual membership dues entitle you to a 1-year Newsletter subscription and merchandise discounts at the Berkeley History Center. Your contributions are tax-deductible.

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We need your help . . .

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We couldn't maintain the Berkeley History Center without the generosity of our volunteers. Join in on the fun by archiving, exhibit planning, hosting events, submitting photographs and staffing the History Center. Learn something new every time and go home smiling knowing that you are helping to preserve a bit of Berkeley's history. Volunteers who donate just three hours a month enable the History Center to thrive. Need the particulars or want to ask a question about the volunteer positions? Give us a call at (510) 848-0181 during the Center's business hours (Thursday through Saturday, from 1 to 4 p.m.) or drop us a note.

Some areas to consider:		
☐ Filing the archives☐ Staffing the Center	Cataloguing photosOrganizing programs	

Berkeley Historical Society • P.O. Box 1190, Berkeley, CA 94701
THANK YOU FOR PRESERVING BERKELEY'S HISTORY
Visit the Museum in the Veterans Memorial Building.

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Advertising space available

Show your support by purchasing ad space in our next BHS Newsletter:

- Business Card size: 2" width x 3.5" height, one run/\$50, 4 runs/\$150
- Quarter Page size: 3.5" width x 4.5" height, one run/\$75, 4 runs/\$225

SPECIFICATIONS:

- 1. Black, white, and greyscale Images
- 2. PDF format
- 3. 300+ dpi resolution
- 4. Submit via CD or through e-mail

- 5. Deadlines are Feb. 15 (for Spring), March 15 (for Summer), Aug. 15 (for Fall), and Nov. 15 (for Winter).
- 6. Acceptance and placement of the advertisement is at the discretion of the Newsletter editor and publisher.
- 7. Your advertisement submission and payment must be submitted by deadline. Make check payable to the "Berkeley Historical Society."
- 8. Send to Margot Lind, Berkeley Historical Society Newsletter Editor, P.O. Box 1190, Berkeley, CA 94701-1190, or e-mail <mlind@lmi.net>.

Calendar of Events

WALKING TOUR: AUGUST 19 - 10 AM Oakland's Elmhurst Area Oakland Heritage Alliance, 763-9218.

WALKING TOUR: AUGUST 20 - 10 AM Oakland's Fruitvale Area Oakland Heritage Alliance, 763-9218.

WALKING TOUR: AUGUST 26- 10 AM Rock Parks of Berkeley
Berkeley Path Wanderers 528-3355.

WALKING TOUR: AUGUST 27- 10 AM Oakland's Cypress Structure Earthquake Memorial Oakland Heritage Alliance, 763-9218.

The Newsom Brothers

Bay Area architects who designed the magnificent Carson Mansion in Eureka. Alameda Museum, 748-0796.

WALKING TOUR: SEPTEMBER 6- 10 AM Northbrae & Thousand Oaks Paths Berkeley Path Wanderers, 528-3355.

WALKING TOUR: SEPTEMBER 16- 2 PM Mills College Campus

Oakland Heritage Alliance, 763-9218.

WALKING TOUR: SEPTEMBER 23- 10 AM North Shattuck Neighborhood Berkeley Historical Society, 848-0181.

WALKING TOUR: SEPTEMBER 23 - 10 AM Strawberry Creek Walk
Berkeley Path Wanderers, 524-4715.

"Steamboating on San Francisco Bay & the Sacramento Delta, 1850 - 1950" Alameda Museum, 748-0796.

WALKING TOUR: OCTOBER 7 - 10 AM Rocks of Thousand Oaks
Berkeley Historical Society, 848-0181.

WALKING TOUR: OCTOBER 21 - 10 AM
Peraltas of Codornices Creek
Berkeley Historical Society, 848-0181.



Berkeley Historical Society 1931 CENTER ST., BERKELEY, CA 94701 Non Profit Org. U.S. POSTAGE PAID Permit #131 Berkeley, CA

In Memorium: Willa Klug Baum

Willa Klug Baum passed away in May 2006. A pioneer as Director of the Regional Oral History Office at UC Berkeley for four decades, she assisted in and encouraged the creation of an Oral History Program at the Berkeley Historical Society in 1981. Her loyal and consistent support of the BHS continued over the years. She will be missed greatly.

BHS' Fall 2006 exhibit Berkeley 75 Years Ago

The next Historical Society exhibit, 'Berkeley 75 Years Ago" is in preparation and will open in September. It will look at our town "back then" and explore what it meant to be a Berkeleyan in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

A special exhibit program event will be held in the Fall at the Berkeley History Center. Watch for mailings and newspaper publicity for announcement of the event date and more details. You are invited!

Harold Adler's Photo Exhibit

The Whole World's Watching: Peace and Social Justice Movements of the 1960's and 1970's (with a 21st Century update), curated by Harold Adler. The exhibition presents 100 images taken during turbulent times by noted photographers. A 160-page catalog with text by scholars and activists accompanies the exhibition. The exhibit runs from September 24 through November 4 at the Berkeley Art Center, 1275 Walnut Street, Berkeley. For information, call 644-6893.

Fall Walking tours

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Saturday, December 2:

Bonus Tour: Historic Claremont Hotel and Gardens, led by staff

Tours start at 10 a.m. and end at approximately noon. Each tour is restricted to 30 paying participants. Prepaid reservations are required.

The non-refundable donation for each tour is \$8 each for BHS members and \$10 each for the general public. Season tour tickets are available to BHS members only for \$30 for all six tours. Society memberships are \$20/individual and \$25 family.

Tours are conducted in rain, shine or Berkeley fog, and are generally wheel-chair accessible unless otherwise noted. There is a Walking Tours insert included in this newsletter with the particulars. For more infomration, please call the Berkeley Historical Society at (510) 848-0181.